

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1. (Currently Amended) A manhole covering, for an access aperture, comprising at least a pair of manhole cover plates, of unequal sizes, that are positionable one adjacent the other along a line of juxtaposition to define at least part of the covering, the larger of said pair of cover plates including one or more primary strengthening members and at least a first auxiliary strengthening member of the covering, wherein the primary strengthening member is larger than the auxiliary strengthening member; and the smaller of the pair of cover plates includes including at least one primary or auxiliary strengthening member, and wherein each said primary strengthening member extends generally parallel to said line of juxtaposition.

Claim 2. (Cancelled).

Claim 3. (Currently Amended) A manhole covering according to claim 1 wherein each said strengthening member includes an elongate rib protruding from the in-use underside of said cover plate.

Claim 4. (Currently Amended) A manhole covering according claim 1 or 3, wherein the larger cover plate of said pair includes at least a pair of seats for supporting said cover plate in a frame; and wherein the primary strengthening member substantially interconnects said seats.

Claim 5. (Cancelled).

Claim 6. (Currently Amended) A manhole covering according to claim 1 or 3, wherein the primary strengthening member lies closer to said line of juxtaposition than to any other edge of the larger of the pair of cover plates.

Claim 7. (Currently Amended) A manhole covering according to claim 1 or 3, including three or more cover plates.

Claim 8. (Currently Amended) A covering according to claim 7 including one or more further lines of juxtaposition along which at least one respective pair of cover plates are positionable one adjacent the other.

Claim 9. (Currently Amended) A manhole covering according to claim 1 or 3, the cover plates of which, when positioned one adjacent the other along one or more lines of juxtaposition as appropriate, define a rectangular covering.

Claim 10. (Currently Amended) A manhole covering according to claim 9 including a line of juxtaposition that is a straight line intersecting two adjacent sides of the rectangular covering defined by the cover plates.

Claim 11. (Currently Amended) A manhole covering according to claim 9 including a line of juxtaposition that intersects a diagonal of the rectangular covering.

Claim 12. (Currently Amended) A manhole covering according to claim 9 including a line of juxtaposition that is spaced from the diagonal, of the rectangular covering, that it is proximate.

Claim 13. (Currently Amended) A manhole covering according to claim 1 or 3, wherein the larger of the pair of cover plates includes two strengthening members; and the smaller of the pair includes a single strengthening member.

Claim 14. (Currently Amended) A manhole covering according to claim 1 or 3 including a connection securing the cover plates of the pair one to the other.

Claim 15. (Cancelled).

Claim 16. (Currently Amended) A manhole covering according to claim 14 wherein the connection permits pivoting of the plates along the line of juxtaposition.

Claim 17. (Currently Amended) A surface access assembly including a frame defining the boundary of an aperture; and a manhole covering according to claim 3, the covering being moveably receivable in the frame so as to permit closing and opening of the aperture.

Claim 18. (Previously Presented) An assembly according to claim 17 including a hinge pivotably securing one of said cover plates to the frame.

Claim 19. (Original) An assembly according to claim 17 or claim 18, wherein the frame and each said cover plate engage one another at three mutually spaced locations so as to define a non-rocking support for each cover plate.

Claim 20. (Previously Presented) An access assembly according to claim 17, wherein the aperture is rectangular; and the direction of elongation of the primary strengthening member generally coincides with a diagonal of the rectangular aperture.